

Terry Brennan - Editor's Desk

Country life has its drawbacks

Boy, how life can change when things you take for granted suddenly disappear.

Probably, like many transplanted city folks, we had developed a certain snobbishness about the obvious benefits of country living. Friends would come to visit and, with puffed out chests, we would wax poetic about the peace and quiet, the clean air and the clean water.

It didn't take long for us to understand how fragile an existence we shared with nature. All of those "benefits" could be

shattered overnight.

Our peace and quiet could be destroyed by a neighbor selling out to a motor home developer, a stone-blasting quarry, or a landfill pirate. Our clean air could be polluted by a neighboring county or township's decision to build an incinerator upwind, or by the construction of a nefariously hidden chemical plant.

Water? The water you can never trust. When we moved into our new house a little over a year ago, it didn't take long to realize there was something wrong with the water. The blue stains in the sinks and the tubs were a signal we couldn't miss. We had our well tested and found our water was highly acidic. But that was all.

It was crystalline otherwise. No nitrates or nitrites, no detergents, no coliform bacteria. Clean water ... smug smile.

We got a conditioner to take care of the acidity and last week had the conditioner refilled and checked for its annual maintenance. And, as a formality, we had the water tested.

So long, Mr. Smug.

Our well tested to 48 parts per 100 mililiters of coliform bacteria. The acceptable levels of bacteria are zero to 2.2 parts per 100. There was an asterisk beside the 48. At the bottom of the page was another asterisk, with the notation "possible health hazard".

discussion. Last week, the 28 members of Mrs.

Sova's class responded, sending us let-Mercury.

Then I called Rick Stump, laboratory director of Suburban Water Testing Labs. He told us the contamination could come from surface water getting into the well, or waste water getting into the aquifer and into our 100-foot well.

The odds are we may never find out from where the pollution is coming. The odds are, despite the quick-fix step we took (pouring a gallon of chlorine bleach into the well and making sure it was mixed throughout the system), the well may continue to be polluted.

There are ways - expensive ways, with ultra-violet filters — to treat a polluted well. That will probably make the

water safe to drink.

But, right now, we're washing all our dishes, silverware, glasses and counter tops with a solution of bottled water and chlorine bleach. Right now, anytime we take a shower it smells like a swimming

Right now, our smug smiles have turned to frowns, our chests have sagged and our spirits are as limp as last summer's flowers under this winter's first snow.

There's radon in the ground, crud in the water and God knows what in the air. Maybe the city wasn't so bad, after all.

Another surprise came in the mail last week. This one much nicer.

Mrs. Sharon Sova, who teaches sixth grade at Boyertown Elementary School, has been participating in the Newspaper in Education program. As we do with other schools in the area, each Friday The Mercury donates newspapers for Mrs. Sova's class to use in reading and

ters about their impressions of The

The majority of the kids liked the comics page ("even though some are corny") and the sports section best. But some of

"I like ... what happens like crashes, fires, when something happens, stuff like that. And also, The Mercury is the best newspaper in town," Jeff Rhoads. Thanks Jeff, but it's easy being the best when you're the only newspaper in town.

"I like the first section where are all the places you can eat," Scott Thomas.

"I like the World the best because I like to know what is going on between Iran and Iraq. Someday I would like to be an Air Force recruit and I would appreciate it very much if you would write up a segment about the Air Force," Damon

"I have an ad for you to put in the paper. Our school has been funding a Young Astronauts program. I would like you to advertise the program so that other schools would feel encouraged to do the same. Thank you for your support," Joshua Rhoads.

"Thank you for sending us a neatly wrapped paper. We hope it stays the same," Chad Thrasher. So do we, Chad.

"I think The Mercury is the best paper because it is easy to read and less complicated. There is not much I can say about the paper, except that it could use more color," Janna Korkie. We're working on that.

"I really like when you put the children's birthdays in," Allison Clouser.

"My favorite articles are the editorials and the letters to the editor. But, most of all, I like the comics," Melissa Frey. Some days, Melissa, the letters are funnier than the comics.

"I especially like the comics. When I read some of them I think they're weird, but then I get them," Daniel Palopoli.

"I like it because I get to read it instead of my reading book," Nathaniel

"My favorite parts of the newspaper are the sports, comics and the main news. I just hope it will be as good as